



**U.S. Department of Justice**

**Stephen J. Murphy  
United States Attorney  
Eastern District of Michigan**

*Suite 2001  
211 West Fort Street  
Detroit, Michigan 48226-3277  
Fax: (313) 226-3561*

**For Immediate Release:**

**Contact:** Susan Plochinski (313) 226-9193  
Greg Palmore - ICE (313) 446-3745

March 9, 2006

---

**EVENT: Conviction**

**Defendant: Joseph Djoumessi and Evelyn Djoumessi**

**CAMEROONIAN COUPLE CONVICTED ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING CHARGES**

---

Two Cameroonian nationals, permanent resident aliens, were convicted of involuntary servitude and related charges for forcing a young girl from Cameroon to perform child care and domestic chores through the use of threats and beatings, United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy and Assistant Attorney General Wan J. Kim, of the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice announced.

The Honorable Arthur J. Tarnow, United States District Court Judge for the Eastern District of Michigan, found defendant Joseph Djoumessi guilty of conspiracy, involuntary servitude, and harboring for financial gain.

A jury convicted Evelyn Djoumessi of conspiracy, and involuntary servitude. She was acquitted of one count of harboring the girl for financial gain.

According to the evidence produced at trial, between October 1996 and February 2000, the Djoumessi's brought the girl into the United States illegally. During the time that the girl lived in their home, they forced her to care for their children and perform household chores

without pay by beating and threatening her. They also limited her contact with the outside world and did not permit her to attend school.

The prosecution of individuals involved in human trafficking is a top priority of the Justice Department. Since 2001, the Justice Department has charged more than 150 human traffickers and secured convictions for 109 defendants, nearly twice the number convicted during the previous four years.

"Imprisoning, beating, and compelling the involuntary servitude of an innocent teenager is among the most heinous of crimes. This conviction underscores the seriousness with which this Office views all crimes of human trafficking," said Stephen J. Murphy, Attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan.

"Involuntary servitude is modern-day slavery," said Wan J. Kim, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. "As long as these types of offenses continue to exist in our society, the Justice Department will vigorously prosecute those who engage in the trafficking of human beings."

"It is a basic and fundamental human right to be free, and no child should ever be forced to live in a world of fear and involuntary servitude," said Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Special Agent in Charge Brian M. Moskowitz. "Today's indictment is a testament to our solemn commitment to protect those who cannot protect themselves. While we cannot restore someone's childhood, we can bring their abusers to justice."

The Djoumessi's each face a maximum sentence of 20 years' imprisonment, three years' supervised release and a fine of \$250,000. They could also be ordered to make restitution to the victim. Sentencing has been set for June 8, 2006.

The case was jointly prosecuted by Gary Felder, Assistant United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan and Jacqueline Spratt from the Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division. The case was investigated by agents of the United States Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement.